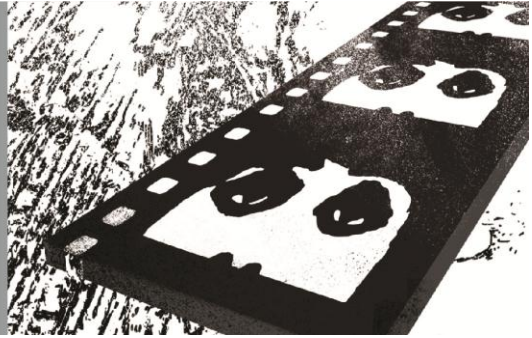


48th Chicago International Film Festival

October 11–25, 2012



Cinema/Chicago and the 48th Chicago International Film Festival

Education Outreach Program Screening: *Benji*

Directors: Coodie and Chike

79 minutes, unrated, in English

Synopsis: In 1984, all eyes were on Ben Wilson, a high school senior on the verge of leading Chicago's Simeon High to its second straight state basketball championship and seemingly destined for NBA greatness. But Benji's story was cut tragically short when he was shot and killed in broad daylight on his way to school. Interviews with family and friends give fresh insight into Benji's life and untimely end, illuminating one of sport's most tragic "what ifs".

Recommended for: humanities, social studies, cultural studies, film and video studies

Appropriate for: all high school students (this film contains some adult language and themes)

1. One of the interview subjects in *Benji* says that Ben Wilson represents a "dream unfulfilled." How does Ben's story both inspire and discourage people who hear it?
2. Ben Wilson grew up on the South Side of Chicago. His upbringing, choices and opportunities were not necessarily different than anyone else he knew. Why and how do you think he became as talented as he was?
3. How is Ben's death similar to stories in the news today? What has changed about Chicago gun violence and what has not?
4. Imagine that Ben Wilson had not died. What do you think he would have accomplished and where would he be today?
5. After his death, Ben's mother says "It's not how long you live, but how well you live." Think about what that means and why it was important that she said it. Do you agree or disagree?
6. Ben's funeral and memorial become, as one interview subject says "a show...Ben Wilson touched the hearts of so many people in the city, but the show and circus that went around it, I didn't like it." What do you think of the response leading up to and during Ben's funeral? Do you understand why people responded so passionately to that event?
7. In the film you hear from Ben's killer Billy Moore. Do you feel sympathy for him? Why or why not?
8. In the film, Ben is described as being a "folk hero." What is a folk hero, and how does that phrase correctly describe Ben?
9. Is there a sports or entertainment figure you look up to and admire? Think about what you admire them for and how/if they shape the choices you make in your life.
10. Ben immersed himself in basketball. What do you participate in that brings you happiness (sports, music, etc.), and how do you share that happiness with people around you?

Useful Links and Resources:

General information about Ben Wilson: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Wilson_\(basketball\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Wilson_(basketball))

Chicago Tribune article on the 25th anniversary of Ben's death:
http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2009-11-15/sports/0911140247_1_ben-wilson-simeon-death

Trailer for the film: <http://espn.go.com/video/clip?id=8395102>

Information about Cinema/Chicago's Education Outreach Program:
<http://cinemachicago.org/education/>

Schools that do not send in essay requirement will not be allowed to attend future Education Outreach Screenings.